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ABSTRACT

Four considerations in the teaching of reading in the content areas were discussed: (1) the state of teaching itself, of reading, and of the content areas; (2) the characteristics of today's student; (3) some basic assumptions and arguments for content-area reading; and (4) steps toward implementing a content-area reading program. The author makes the following statements: (1) Critics of education claim we are failing to reach the young because we are obsessed with content and methodology geared toward cognitive learning, whereas youth culture today is affective and totally alien to cognition. (2) The media to which youth are attuned involve light, color, sound, and movement with a deemphasis on reading. (3) To make reading relevant and necessary for youth, it must be taught as a means of achieving goals which are concerned with their attitudes and values. (4) The content-area teacher is in the most favorable position for teaching both content and process whereby the material is treated in depth and reading skills are applied immediately in context. (5) Through daily contact with students, assessment can be made of attitudes and values which can be incorporated into cognitive goals. References are included. (DH)

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THE RATIONALE FOR TEACHING READING IN THE CONTENT FIELDS

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The topic assigned me for examination today poses some unusual constraints and limitations, particularly for one who views himself more as a practitioner than a theorist. "Rationale" dictates consideration of the underlying reasons, the "why's" for the teaching of reading in the content areas, precluding the practical implications and examples which might be of greater interest both to you and me. I have however been challenged to theorize and speculate -- no simple task!

The ensuing remarks fall into four interlocking stages. First, it is imperative to examine the elements of the topic: what is the state of <u>teaching</u> itself, of <u>reading</u>, and of the <u>content areas</u>? These have been under severe attack in recent years, with consequences for every educator. Second, from general consideration of the status of these ingredients, I will attempt to distill some conclusions which relate directly to the most essential but unspecified ingredient -- the student. None of us doubts, each of us experiences daily, the cultural phenomenon of youth, whatever the age; only when we appreciate some of the forces governing pre-adolescent and adolescent attitude can we hope to deal competently with any kind of constructive teaching. Third, having established this composite frame of reference, I will suggest some basic assumptions and arguments regarding content area reading. Finally, I choose to propose a few

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practical steps toward implementing a total program of content area reading.

Education -- 1970: What Is It?

Strange things are happening in and to education today. Criticism of education has always been fashionable; today, it is common place. Since the mid-50's, education has been subjected to its most extreme criticism: some revolutionary, some strident and vitriolic, much of it reasoned and serious, all of it sincere and provocative -- which, while defying synthesis, does add up to a severe indictment of American education in 1970. You are familiar with one or more of these critics; perhaps even you have adopted some of their philosophy of adapted their proposals: Goodman, Holt, Friedenberg, Postman and Weingartner, Kozol, Herndon, Rickover, and more recently, Charles E. Silberman. The only core of complaint common to all is that our present system of education is failing to reach the young; we are overly concerned with content and methodology to the exclusion of the real concerns of the young; our schools are joyless, ineffectual, even destructive of trust and learning -- "intellectually sterile and aesthetically barren.". Subsumed under this general plaint are a variety of suggestions and directives -- some highly impractical and idealistic, others reasonable and possible.

The recurrent admonitions have an almost stavistic quality, throwing us back to the practices of an earlier day. Individualized instruction, for example, would place teacher and student at opposite ends

of Mark Hopkin's log. Others would have us return to Rousseau's naturalism, placing the child in as free an atmosphere as possible. Silberman's admiration of the English schools resembles the adulation of Progressive Education as it flourished, then floundered, two generations ago. All, however, do insist that we must look at the student, his needs, attitudes and values. And it is the teachers and the systems which are at fault.

Nor has reading escaped censure, but this requires little elaboration in such an audience. With every issue, our own journals confirm our problems. We still have not achieved an acceptable and workable definition of reading; we are at the mercy of publishers for curriculum and materials; we are probably the most fad-conscious professional group in the country, grasping at every new game, device, and combination of approaches to solve our problems -- all attesting to our confusion and our deep concern. Reading is supposedly a lifetime pleasurable pursuit; there was a time when it was fun, now it is a task. Skills have proliferated beyond control; ends have become pragmatic; urgency has become anxiety approaching despair. Most of us seem to agree that remedial and special reading programs are only half-measures, quite incapable of coping with the geometrically increasing numbers of the newly retarded each year. We are attempting to dam Niagara with a sieve. More and more authorities agree that our only hope is to get purposeful instructed reading into the subject-matter classroom, although we are at a loss as how best to effect it.

And what about the content itself? Ah, here at least we have made some strides! Or have we, really? Stemming from Sputnik, instigated by the Zacharias, study groups have spawned acronymic curriculums: SMSG, BSCS, CBI, and others. These were good, many still are, although I do question their total relevance today. Their thrust is toward the cognitive, the search for meaning in structure and content. "Inquiry-type" teaching -- still the most valuable heritage of this movement -- places responsibility for questioning, search, and identification on the students themselves. To abet this zestful new learning, educational innovations have flooded our marketplace: a smorgasbord of "goodies." Pick any one, wed it to the new curriculum, and lo -- success! Flexible scheduling, open and ungraded schools and educational parks, computer assisted instruction and individually prescribed instruction, programmed learning, performance criteria and behavioral objectives, differentiated staffing, sound, color and motion through the media! Has any one, or combination of any, been the answer? Is this not the very educational atmosphere which the critics are decrying? True, all of this has systematized teaching, but has it accelerated or truly encouraged reading and learning? At the same time, during the past decade, teacher training institutions discovered Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives and Mager's Preparing Instructional Objectives, a cook-book reduction and application of the Taxonomy. So our new teachers have beautiful curriculums, countless innovative devices and techniques, all guided by a packaged approach to planning and teaching. To what end -- all this? Not ends, only means; means to identify, utilize and refine

cognitive functions! How can control be attained and maintained? How can a teacher effectively teach this particular subject matter to these children?

The Student -- Where Does He Fit?

Unfortunately, the children -- particularly pre-adolescents and adolescents -- seem to have been left out of all this planning. Meantime, their own culture was evolving: a culture of feeling; of freedom and values and trust and love; an affective culture seeking self-definition and constructive relationships with others; a culture and philosophy in action which is totally alien to the cognitive.

Our youth, our students, are a baffling group -- as your own experience will attest. What has been termed a generation gap is rather a cognitive-affective gap. We grew up accepting the ancient principle that "to know is to love." So we studied and we learned; we distrusted and intellectualized our feelings. We fail to understand the young, not because we do not care, but simple because we cannot feel as they do. And we cannot unmake or remake them; we have only them to work with. Their values are valid, are honest. If we cannot condone these values, we must at least consider and adjust to them.

The total culture of the young may be attributable to a materialistic society or to overly permissive parents. Their school culture and learning habits, however, have a different root. I argue that they have simply grown up learning through totally different modalities than did we. Every student in school today is a product of the media age. From infancy television has been a part of their life; in hardly a day of school have they lacked exposure to audio-visual devices

and techniques. As a result, their learning-receptive modalities are attuned to light, sound, color, and movement. Reading is only a part of their learning repertory, and possibly the least attractive and effective.

This is precisely the issue toward which I have been building: We noted major concern for the student and their world of values in the voices of our more articulate critics. Yet the entire thrust of our educational system -- teaching, the content areas, and reading-- has been toward the cognitive, not the affective. But "knowledge per se does not necessarily lead to desirable behavior. Knowledge can generate feeling but it is feeling that generates action." (1) I am not advocating any rejection or departure from cognitive objectives. Both affect and cognition govern motivation and learning. If our present system, as it does, emphasizes cognition at the expense of affect, we must somehow foster harmony between the two. And I am proposing that we approach the cognitive through the affective. We must work with our students where they are.

So, you ask, what does this mean in terms of reading? Simply stated, it means a return to enjoyment and success in reading, reading as both incentive and product. Herber succinctly points out that the reading teacher's curriculum is a set of skills, wherein reading is taught directly using any material that will fulfill the need of the moment; on the other hand, the "content teacher's curriculum is a specific set of concepts within a body of knowledge" ... and "teaches reading functionally -- not for its own sake but rather as processes

to aid students' acquisition of his course content." (2) There are no avid readers in special reading classes; the skills emphasis is too pragmatic. But if reading is a process grounded in the students' personal and academic values and attitudes, cognitive and affective response can be accomplished only in the content area classroom. Not every content lends itself to affective learning. The sciences and mathematics appear to be largely cognitive in direction. The social studies and language arts are greater sources of self-discovery and generators of interest. But every subject matter embraces both cognitive and affective means and objectives, and every content area teacher must discern the values and attitudes of his students for effective reading and learning.

Assumptions and Arguments for Content Area Reading

If then you accept this premise that the dominant cultural trait of our young is an almost conscious discriminatory choice of affective over cognitive, it should follow that these can be recognized -- to be utilized -- through intimate continuous contact, that which is possible only in the content area classroom. Although I seem to be resting my entire argument on this assumption, there are other sound arguments why successful reading can be effected only in the content classroom.

1. The basic argument has already been presented, that which, quoting Herber, distinguishes between the curriculums of the reading teacher and the content teacher. The content teacher is responsible for teaching that specific body of knowledge which is his content, the facts and information which lead to the concepts from which generalization derives. Simultaneously, he must teach process,

that is, access or entry to the pattern or structure of the subject matter, those procedures by which students acquire information and generate concepts.

2. Whatever insight a special reading teacher may have into the structure of a particular subject matter, she cannot provide the quality of application possible by the content teacher. The science, mathematics, social studies, literature, or language teacher has mastered that subject through years of increasingly intensive study of the content. That teacher is familiar with the characteristic language and concept patterns which the content demands. In mathematics, for example, it is possible to assist a pupil in translating word problems to their computational base, but complete entry to the complex verbal base of abstract math requires sophisticated guidance. This grasp of the pattern, "thinking" mathematics, can come only from one who has experienced the difficulties and mastered the subject, one who is grounded in the structure through long experience.

3. Skills are essential and may be successfully drilled in a special reading class. But their application and intensification can result only from use in context -- the meaningful, pragmatic search for learning in the content area. Although the content area teacher may dispute his obligation, if he is a conscientious teacher he will be alert to the skills and needs of his students: the specialized meanings of words, the purpose to be associated with study-type reading, the degree of comprehension necessary in a particular project, the utility and application of visual materials in the text. He may scorn word analysis skills, unless these are

clearly evident, but students with such a need would still require remedial attention. The successful reading of the content, which is the responsibility and reward of every teacher, must embody mastery of all the elements of reading.

4. "Printed material is only one medium through which students gain information and develop ideas." (3) The resourceful teacher will involve a variety of media to stimulate the learning of his students. All projected media require their own special kind of "reading" for understanding; visual aids in the text -- maps, graphs, charts, even pictures -- can be major sources of learning; but only the content teacher is capable of determining their significance and interpreting their application.

5. Moreover, only through this functional teaching of reading within the content classroom can complete integration of all the elements of successful reading develop. Not alone the skills, but the purpose, interest, and motivation of the experienced teacher and the experienced student will be united around the single body of concepts which constitute the structure to be grasped. Otherwise, sustained continuity and growth cannot be assured.

6. Furthermore, only the content teacher can cope immediately with evident reading failure. Without referral for special assistance and the consequent interruption of continuity, he is able to modify his techniques, purposes and materials. He can abruptly readjust his objectives to the capacity of the student, provide private help, team weak with strong, supplement explicit for more

complex materials. Most of all, recognizing some reading difficulty common to the group or singular to the content, he can blend the direct and functional teaching of reading, wedding skills and process by analyzing passages, developing concepts methodically from concrete illustration to abstract conclusion.

7. Acknowledging that reading has both cognitive and affective ends, only the content teacher can lead students to that convergence on meaning which is critical reading -- to the intensity which comprises the application and evaluation levels of the Taxonomy. Special reading classes rarely reach these levels; since their materials lack immediacy for the students, all too often direct reading instruction operates on restricted superficial levels. The content area teacher, however, must guide his students from accumulation of basic information toward precision and generalization, that point wherein pattern is recognized and learning realized. It is only in the pragmatic content of this subject matter that intensive critical reading is relevant, when implication and intention and application coalesce. Not all students, of course, will attain this, but each can to his own capacity.

8. Finally and of greatest importance, the content teacher through daily contact with his students in continuous, integrative situation, can assess their value systems, build cognitive goals which incorporate their attitudes, and reach toward improved affect. He can balance cognitive and affective, enlisting both psychological and emotional factors. For, as Krathwohl and Bloom state, cognitive

objectives suppose affective components; cognitive objectives can be means toward affective goals. (4) Every teacher seeks to develop continuing interest in his subject matter on the part of students, to stimulate certain attitudes toward the phenomena and concepts encountered.

Whatever the dynamics of special reading classes, cognitive and affective factors are rarely associated simultaneously, because students cannot sustain any intrinsic motivation toward the materials which comprise the skills curriculum. On the other hand, the content teacher can and must start with the value, attitudinal and interest systems of the students -- and peer culture has molded these singularly -- enlisting them to initiate growth in both cognitive and affective domains.

You may justifiably object that all subject matters do not permit affective entry, that the sciences and mathematics are essentially cognitive. This has been touched on before but needs further clarification. No content area is devoid of value or attitudinal products or influences. It is true that the social studies and language arts often appear to draw from and contribute more to the affective than to the cognitive -- and consequently require differing techniques. Herber insists that to effect "simultaneous teaching of content and process ... lessons must be well structured, never haphazard." This is certainly true when cognitive goals prevail. Even within structure, there must be latitude for spontaneity -- in all subjects but particularly in social studies and literature. In the

reading and ensuing discussion of any area students' own values and interests will provoke totally unexpected forays of involved debate. With subtle guidance, this "inquiry type" learning may explore unplanned areas and lead to highly productive and desirable learnings. Structure is not abandoned, merely adapted. Ideally, of course, such inquiry situations should be planned, blending current values with cognitive searches toward a new level of affective behavior.

Some Practical Implications

There are obvious and contestable assumptions inherent in this rational. It assumes content teachers with some knowledge of reading principles, aware of the need at the moment it arises, deeply sensitive toward their students and how they engage the subject matter. Good teachers have always been and done thus. But how do we meet, how do we convert the mass of teachers who condemn or ignore the responsibility of embodying reading instruction in content teaching? Or those who, though sincere and concerned, are incapable of meeting reading needs? Those of us who have been advocating content area teaching of reading for years now admit some bafflement and hopelessness. Improved and extensive content area reading improvement can never be effected without administrative leadership, a real commitment in principle, time, money and programs. The only acceptable programs I have observed derive from a leadership committee comprising administrators, counselors, reading personnel, librarians, content department heads, parents and students. Some small success

has come from converting the reading teacher into a reading resource teacher with access to content classrooms on a consultative basis. In such cases, however, a fair amount of subtle insinuation and infiltration -- diplomacy, tact and patience -- were required. In final analysis, change in reading instruction, if applied to content areas, must come through teacher education, realization on the part of teacher trainers in the academic areas that access to content and structure will result only with discerning reading which, with its multiple facets, will continue to be the major source of learning.

Concluding Statement

This has been a taxing assignment. The speculation it has demanded has been challenging and possibly more rewarding for me than for you. I have no great optimism relative to increased or improved reading instruction in the content areas. Nonetheless, my conviction is unwavering: until all content area teachers at all levels make at least minimal application of basic reading principles as they relate to content subjects, we will never perceptibly diminish reading problems or achieve independent reading competency.

More deeply felt, if not convincingly explicated, is our need to listen to the young. Their feelings cannot be ignored or dismissed; the universality and desperation of these feelings bespeak sincerity and validity. If traditional classrooms continue, they must allow for joy, freedom and spontaneity, easy discussion, and inquiry-type learning -- with the normal restraints which organization

and purpose will provide. I have theorized extensively and inconclusively on how the affective realm may be tapped and influenced. How reading instruction and curriculum may blend cognitive and affective goals requires much study, thought and observation -- a task I promise to pursue.

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